

Message

From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: 10/23/2014 1:00:44 AM
To: Burdett, Cheryl [burdett.cheryl@epa.gov]; 'Scott Krug' [scott.krug@gmail.com]; info@burkeforwisconsin.com; Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Subject: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP) 'Anderson, Russell A - DNR' [Russell.Anderson@wisconsin.gov]; 'Baumann, Dan G - DNR' [Dan.Baumann@wisconsin.gov]
FW: Groups ask EPA to investigate pollution causes by cattle farms

From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: Wednesday, October 22, 2014 7:52 PM
To: undisclosed-recipients:
Subject: Fwd: Groups ask EPA to investigate pollution causes by cattle farms

Again, residents are being forced to take drastic measures to protect their drinking water from the effects of manure. Where is the DNR in this? What about other agencies of the current administration? Is it going to take the Feds to demand state agencies take action? Citizens should not have to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars as they did at Richfield to force the DNR to do it's job. The lieutenant Governor pushes for expanding dairy, offering tax free incentives to farmers, most of which will be gobbled up by the CAFO operators, and never once mentions the need to balance growth with environmental protection. I've had about enough of this business first mentality. How about you?

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Subject: Groups ask EPA to investigate pollution causes by cattle farms

<http://m.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/groups-ask-epa-to-investigate-pollution-causes-by-cattle-farms-b99376038z1-280059792.html>

Groups ask EPA to investigate pollution causes by cattle farms

Six environmental groups on Wednesday asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to exercise emergency powers under the Safe Drinking Water Act to investigate groundwater contamination in cattle-intensive Kewaunee County in northeastern Wisconsin.

In a petition to the federal agency, the groups say the state Department of Natural Resources has failed to protect drinking water for county residents on two fronts: through its powers to regulate groundwater; and the agency's oversight of large-scale cattle operations.

The environmental groups estimate that the tens of thousands of cattle in the county produce the manure equivalent of more than 900,000 humans — or more than the city of Milwaukee.

Last year, 149 wells, or nearly 31% of the 483 wells tested in the county, contained bacteria or nitrates — or both — that exceeded state and federal public health standards. In the Town of Lincoln, half the wells that were tested exceeded the standard, according to the petition.

The well testing was conducted by the county conservation department and was analyzed by the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

"Everyone deserves safe, clean and reliable drinking water, but Kewaunee County residents gamble with their health simply by turning on the faucets in their homes," Elizabeth Wheeler, staff attorney with Clean Wisconsin, said in a statement. "We're seeking federal action to help create a long-term solution to what's unfortunately been a long-term problem for thousands of people in the area."

The petition has political overtones because it comes less than two weeks before the Nov. 4 election between Republican Gov. Scott Walker and Democrat Mary Burke, and environmental groups have complained about lax regulation under Walker.

Environmental groups argue that their petition is not without precedent. In 2013, farmers in Washington state, southeast of Seattle, agreed to reduce nitrate levels after the EPA used drinking water regulations to intervene.

A spokeswoman for the EPA said it was reviewing the Wisconsin petition.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported this month that the DNR and the agriculture departments have been meeting on ways the agencies can control phosphorus, a pollutant that washes off streets and farm fields.

In a statement, DNR spokesman Bill Cosh said, the "DNR operates its permit programs to meet all requirements of current laws and rules."

Kewaunee County has emerged as ground zero in a debate over sharp growth in dairying in pockets of Wisconsin and whether farmers can adequately protect the land and water from the growing tide of manure.

Manure has long served as a key source of fertilizer for farmland. But in documents filed with the EPA, the environmental groups contend the volume of animal waste generated by farms in Kewaunee County exceed the land's carrying capacity.

Manure and fertilizer also have been the source of contamination in the state's surface waters, notably algae blooms and the formation of oxygen-deprived dead zones in Green Bay, according to a recent series of stories on the Great Lakes by the Journal Sentinel.

Citing DNR figures in Kewaunee County, the groups said manure from dairy cows, calves, heifers and beef cattle produces 12.4 million pounds of nitrogen annually. But the groups said the 130,228 acres of harvestable acres was able to accommodate about 11.3 million pounds of nitrogen — or a surplus of some 1.2 million pounds.

The DNR says this is misleading because some manure produced on Kewaunee County farms ends up being spread on farms in adjoining counties.

There are about 200 dairy farms in the county, including 15 large-scale farms known as concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs. Farms qualifying as CAFOs have at least 700 milking and dry cows and come under DNR oversight, including a requirement that operators file detailed plans to spread manure.

The number of cattle has grown in the county from 59,800 to 80,000 since 1983, the groups said. Kewaunee County is one of four counties in the state that have experienced an increase in dairy cows between 1983 and 2012.

The growth of the dairying industry is taking place on land that has trouble sustaining so much manure, the groups said. The landscape of Kewaunee County consists of soil overlaying fractured bedrock, which makes it more difficult to prevent manure and water from soaking into the soil and slipping through cracks in the bedrock to reach groundwater.

"Our problem is the ... rockfeatures. That's our problem," said Ron Heuer, chairman of the Kewaunee County Board.

Heuer said he met last summer with DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp, Agriculture Secretary Ben Brancel and others and complained that "we're different here," with some land having as little as 5 feet of soil before reaching bedrock.

Environmentalists have been quick to blame the largest farms, but Heuer said that's unfair. The role of CAFOs can't be ignored, he said, but noted they are under more regulation than smaller farms.

"A cow's a cow, and they all poop and they all pee," Heuer said.

Underscoring the concerns in the county, the board adopted an ordinance unanimously forbidding manure spreading between Jan. 1 and April 15 on land with 20 feet or less of soil depth.

The Wisconsin Dairy Business Association and other farm groups said the ordinance is illegal. The DNR has authority to regulate such activity, not counties, the groups said.

The groups asking help from the EPA are: Clean Wisconsin, Environmental Integrity Project, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Midwest Environmental Defense Center, Kewaunee CARES and the Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin.

Sent from my iPhone

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